

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 DRC-01 /127 W

----- 115478

R 012052Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5660

INFO AMMBASSY BRIDGETOWN 948

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 1226

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT; TD

SUBJECT: IMPLICATINS OF PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS' DECISION TO STEP
DOWN

REF: A. POS 1218

B. POS 1216

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

1. PM WILLIAMS HAS CLOUDED THE LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE WITH A FAR MORE DEFINITE COMMITMENT TO STEP DOWN AS PRIME MINISTER THAN HIS VAGUE THREAT OF 1971, WHICH HE PUBLICLY REVERSED IN 1972. NEVERTHELESS, HIS STATED INTENTIONS ARE SUFFICIENTLY IMPRECISE TO KEEP HIS OPPOSITION (AND HIS FOLLOWERS) OFF BALANCE. WHILE THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT HE IS MERELY SEEKING RENEWED MANDATE AS ESSENTIAL LEADER, WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT SIX MONTHS WILL BE OUTER LIMIT TO HIS REMAINING IN OFFICE AS PRIME MINISTER, ALTHOUGH ALTERNATIVELY HE MIGHT BOW OUT FROM BOTH PARTY AND GOVERNMENT POSITIONS ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. IN EITHER CASE WE WOULD EXPECT NATIONAL ELECTIONS TO FOLLOW.

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2. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: COMBINING AN AUTOCRATIC MANNER WITH NIMBLE POLITICAL FOOTWORK, WILLIAMS HAS SINCE 1956 KEPT MULTI-RACIAL TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ON A REASONABLY STABLE, PRAGMATIC, AND NON-IDEOLOGICAL COURSE LARGELY BY PROVIDING MINIMAL GOVERNMENT, I.E. MAKING MOST DECISIONS ONLY WHEN CRISES IMPEND. RESULTANT DETERIORATION IN GOVT PERFORMANCE AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP HAD RECENTLY REACHED POINT WHERE WILLIAMS' LEADERSHIP WAS INCREASINGLY QUESTIONED. WHETHER FROM INSIDE OR OUTSIDE OF PNM, SUCCESSOR WILL HAVE TO FIGHT HIS WAY TO POWER AND CANNOT COUNT ON THE REAL IF DWINDLING NATIONAL CONSENSUS THAT SO LONG SUPPORTED WILLIAMS.

3. WHETHER ANY LEADER HAS SUFFICIENT STATURE TO HANDLE TRINIDAD'S CURRENT PROBLEMS (E.G. GUERRILLAS, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, PRICES, UNEMPLOYMENT) IS UNCERTAIN. ANY WOULD-BE LEADER WILL BE TEMPTED TO RESORT TO RACIAL POLITICS AND/OR ECONOMIC NATIONALISM TO WIN SUPPORT AND REPRESSION TO RETAIN IT. HUDSON-PHILLIPS IS FRONT-RUNNER TO LEAD PNM (MOHAMMED BEING AN EAST INDIAN), WHILE THE FACTIONALIZED OPPOSITION HAS AS REAL CANDIDATES ONLY LEFT-LINING A.N.R. ROBINSON OR POSSIBLY A COMPROMISE (AND INEVITABLY LACKLUSTER) FRON-MAN FOR TRADITIONAL EAST-INDIAN PARTY. SITUATION IS FAR TOO CONFUSED TO HAZARD PREDICTIONS, BUT PNM REMAINS THE PARTY TO BEAT, AND OPPOSITION GROUPS HAVE NOT YET SHOWN THAT THEY CAN RESPOND TO OPPORTUNITY.

4. DEPARTURE OF WILLIAMS WILL, WE THINK, TAKE SOME OF STEAM OUT OF MOVES OF COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN TOWARD INTEGRATION. ANY SUCCESSOR WILL BE FAR MORE PREOCCUPIED WITH IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS THAN BROAD SWEEP OF CARIBBEAN COOPERATION AND WILL LACK WILLIAMS' REGIONAL STATURE.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S.: WITH INVESTMENTS OF OVER \$600 MILLION (ALMOST ALL IN OIL), U.S. INTEREST IN T&T'S STABILITY IS REAL. LOOKED AT IN LONG TERM, OUR INTEREST IN PEACEFUL TRANSMISSION OF POWER TO A NEW POLITICAL GENERATION ARGUES FOR AN EARLY DEPARTURE BY WILLIAMS. LOOKED AT IN SHORT RUN OUR INTERESTS ARE UNLIKELY TO BENEFIT. OVER PAST YEAR WILLIAMS HAS CUT-OFF ALL REAL COMMUNICATION WITH ME AND HAS BELABORED CHARGES OF "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE." PARADOXICALLY, THIS HAS--BY DESIGN OR OTHERWISE--MADE IT CONFIDENTIAL

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EASIER FOR WILLIAMS TO RESIST IMPORTUNINGS FROM LEFT: HIS SUCCESSOR WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE EASIER TO COMMUNICATE WITH BUT MAY WELL WANT THINGS FROM US AND/OR U.S. CORPORATIONS HERE THAT MAY CAUSE GREATER PROBLEMS THAN NON-COMMUNICATION WITH WILLIAMS. ON INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL SCENE, T&T WILL LIKELY BE LESS MODERATE AND RESPONSIBLE.

6. WHILE THE ABOVE COMMENTS ARE BROAD AND SOMEWHAT

IMPRESSIONISTIC, I THINK THAT WE SHOULD BE AWARE THAT AN
ERA IS PASSING IN T&T WITH THE EXPECTED DEPARTURE OF THE
ONLY PRIME MINISTER THE COUNTRY HAS EVER KNOWN, LEAVING
GROWING PROBLEMS AND NO PREPARATION FOR AN ORDERLY
SUCCESSION.

MARSHALL

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